

SPECIAL MEETING

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2004

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING

845 PARK AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 6:00 P.M.

PUBLIC SESSION: IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MINUTES

A special meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at the William A. Briggs Building in the Reed Conference Room with the following members present: Mr. Cardarelli, Mr. Eramian, Mr. Lupino, Mr. Palumbo, and Mrs. White. Both Mr. Drager and Mr. Stycos were absent. Also present were Mrs. Ciarlo, Mr. Scherza, Mr. Balducci, Mr. Votto, Mr. Laliberte and Mr. Scaffardi.

The meeting was called to order at 6:13 p.m. It was moved, seconded and unanimously carried that the members adjourn to Executive Session to discuss personnel under RI State Law 42-46-5(1) and contract and litigation under RI State Law PL 42-46-5(2).

The meeting reconvened at 7:40 p.m.

The roll was called.

Moved by Mr. Lupino, seconded by Mr. Eramian and carried with Mr. Cardarelli absent for the vote that the September 1, 2004 Executive Session minutes remain confidential.

I. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Lupino stated that he wished to speak regarding some misinformation that had been circulating around the city. The Cranston School Committee had voted in the budget cuts to eliminate middle school interscholastic sports. The trade off for that was to enhance the intramural program not only to save money but also to increase the number of students that are serviced. The misinformation in the city is that the committee cut middle school sports. Some City Council members are thinking that the committee cut all sports at the middle school, and that is not the case. He had an opportunity to speak with Mr. Traficante, who is the athletic coordinator, and he put together some numbers which the School Committee received this evening. The participation at the middle school level for interscholastic sports averages approximately 16% of the population in those schools. He has received more calls in the last week or so from those with political aspirations than he ever received from students, parents,

coaches or anyone else involved in those sports. At the last City Council meeting it was mentioned that a City Council ordinance was not introduced to give the school department the money to reintroduce middle school sports, and the money must be used for that purpose. Councilman McDonough stated at that meeting that it was not the purpose of the executive legislative body of the city to dictate to the school committee how they can spend monies. The numbers from Mr. Traficante speak for themselves. Many more students will be attracted to intramurals, and intramurals are an extension of the school day. There are many students who don't want to go home to play video games or sit in front of their computers. They would rather stay involved in school where their friends are and where there are activities. He felt very justified in the action the School Committee took by eliminating middle school interscholastic sports for the purpose of expanding the intramural program.

II. SPEAKERS – Agenda Items

Russell Ferri, 1164 Scituate Avenue – Mr. Ferri spoke regarding interscholastic middle school sports. He stated that he knows that the committee has not seen a lot of parents, but he has been involved in trying to bring people to the meetings to hear what the committee

had to say regarding middle school sports. There is no question about it that parents are concerned. The parents fell into a malaise because over the years sports has always been an issue on the table, and they felt the School Committee would never cut the sports program. They didn't believe that it would actually happen. With the Mayor's background, the parents thought he would do whatever he could to help out sports. The parents underestimated the whole process. The parents also realize that the School Committee was given extra money from the state and the Mayor has offered money. They know that there is no rule that the School Committee has to accept the Mayor's offer and that he can't dictate to the committee what to do with the money. On the other hand, there are children who enjoy Interscholastic League sports. He is the father of a student at Western Hills who during the last semester made high honors. Sports are very important in his household but academics are as well.

He refers to the children as student athletes. Sports are an entire process that doesn't begin with a child who happens to be better than other children. They have dreams just the same as band members and artists. They play sports in middle school so that they can continue to play in high school. The high schools need that program for their students so that they can develop their skills. The committee wouldn't tell the artists that they can't give them the time or the resources to become better artists. Mr. Ferri mentioned that the schools could have intramural band or art for those students after school, but it wouldn't work. Gym class should take care of those students who want to play sports. It is to help the children exert

energy outside of the classroom. There are skilled students, whether it is the debating team or the baseball team. The committee will be taking what the students do well and asking them not to do it until high school. In the educational process, there is a lot of motivation for the students to continue to do well. His daughter is not allowed to play sports if she attains anything less than a C average. He asked

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how many students were motivated last year because they needed a C average. If some of them didn't have wrestling, baseball, or basketball, the students wouldn't have achieved a C average. The students work hard at their sport after school and then go home to study. This can't be taken away from them. He asked the committee to look at the big picture. It wasn't right to lump some of these students into intramurals. The skilled athlete will make life miserable for the student who can't play that well. They won't have any success against a skilled student athlete. He asked the committee to look at the entire picture. The Mayor is offering money to the school department, and he understood that the committee does not have to use it for what the Mayor is asking them to do. He understood that it was late for the fall sports, but the sports program could be saved. His biggest concern is that once this is let go the district will never get interscholastic middle school sports back again, and the parents can't allow this to happen. Western Hills won the state championship in wrestling, and those students are coming back to defend their title.

Mr. Nero now has to tell those students that they have to play intramurals. He asked the committee to consider the fact that the Mayor has offered to help pay for middle school sports. It is the motivation that helps keep some of these students in school.

Mrs. White commented to Mr. Ferri that every department in this school system was hit by cuts including music, the arts, academics, textbooks, library aides, teacher aides, class sizes, etc. and not just sports. Sports were the least hit of all programs. The school department has been under funded three years in a row. The district cannot continue to be under funded and maintain the same programs.

Not one of the committee members wanted to cut anything from the budget. They had to cut over \$3 million, and if that is the only cut the sports department took, they are lucky. That was the least hurtful cut in the entire school department.

Mr. Ferri responded that putting the Mayor's offer on the table changes the whole complexion of this issue. Mrs. White responded that the Mayor's offer was a political offer. If the Mayor had said the committee could use it where it is needed most, it would not be in the sports program. There are still academic programs that are hurting where the committee cannot fulfill its obligations. The committee had to make some very difficult decisions. People are feeling only the beginning of this. If the school department is under funded again next year, people have not seen the dismantling yet; it has just begun. The committee has been crying this for the past two years,

but now it has hurt a little bit. She asked Mr. Ferri where the parents were when the committee was fighting for the money. Now they are beginning to feel the repercussions. It will be a slow dismantling of this school system. Some of the textbooks are dated 1985, and they have to be replaced. They haven't been able to implement the new mathematics program the way it should because they can't put the textbooks in place. They can't afford to give the teachers the staff development that goes along with it. Mrs. White further commented that she is a sports advocate, and the middle school sports program

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is not her major priority right now; academics are her priority. She doesn't want to eliminate sports or music.

Mr. Palumbo agreed completely with Mrs. White's comments. He commented that he has been involved in sports most of his life. He stated that it was absolutely amazing to him and he is stunned by the fact that a parent or a group of people can come to a meeting worrying about sports before they worry about a student in first grade learning how to read properly or someone in a mathematics program. It is mind boggling. He asked Mr. Ferri how he could be concerned about interscholastic sports at the middle school when the sports are not done right at the secondary level. He asked him how he could be concerned about middle school sports before being concerned about

textbooks, teacher aides, and all of the programs in the school department. When the test scores are printed in the newspaper, no reference is made to sports. They write about how well the students performed in the SAT's and the various other tests. The committee must address these issues first. The Mayor knew this when the budget was cut. Now he comes along stating he will give the district this if they put it in a certain area. The Mayor is way out of line with what he is trying to do, and he is doing it right now for political reasons. Even if the School Committee had close to what is needed for the budget for academic and literacy programs, they would have been able to put back the middle school interscholastic sports back. However, the committee is not even close to what is needed. Tonight the committee is hoping to put back some aides in the classroom so that they can help with the special education population which is mandated by law. He asked how the committee could be concerned with middle school sports

Mr. Eramian suggested that this was the time for speakers on agenda items. The committee would take up this matter as part of the deliberation for the \$512,000 in state aid money, which is Resolution No. 04-9-17. Mr. Cardarelli noted that middle school sports were not a part of this resolution.

Mr. Lupino told Mr. Ferri that he was treading on very shaky ground when he speaks about band and art programs because if an equalization were established for them, one wouldn't see golf,

hockey, volleyball, cross country, or track at the high school level. There would be only football, baseball, softball, and basketball because the number of students who participate, as far as the ratio to the funding, arts and band are sorely under funded. The majority of the money, if both programs are combined together, goes to sports. Mr. Cardarelli has been advocating for years to spend more money on arts and the music programs and equalize it between sports. There are probably more students who are interested in art and music now than there are in sports.

Mr. Cardarelli thanked Mr. Ferri for coming to this meeting and speaking passionately for the students. He commented further that at the high school level, double the students participate in events that get less than half the funding that the sports program

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gets. At the high school level, there are approximately 1,600 to 1,700 students participating in sports and receive approximately \$650,000 worth of funding for it. There are approximately 3,200 to 3,300 students participating in band, art, and science in curriculum based programs, and they receive funding that is around \$300,000. These are programs the students are graded on. The committee has never asked to cut the sports programs. They have always asked to try to equalize it, and they have never been able to get the City Council to approve a budget where the committee has been able to add a little

extra to it. They have never cut a sports budget; they have always asked to level fund sports and bring the extra-curricular and other activities up to a level to add a little extra so that there can be some parity. However, they have never been able to do it. The Superintendent, the Acting Superintendent, and this School Committee were forced to look at everything when they were dealt the blow in Superior Court. They asked themselves what were the luxuries and what were the other issues that this community always had and what were the things this school district could live without. One of the issues the committee looked at was interscholastic sports and intramural sports at the middle school level. As the Chairperson has indicated previously, there are many textbooks that are grossly outdated. There are children who are not meeting any type of standard the district would be proud of. The district is morally negligent in its obligation to these students. Sports are the least of the committee's concerns right now. If they can't have a child read, the last thing they need to do is have a child on the playing field. He agreed with Mr. Ferri that it was a travesty for those students who would be wrestling and can't be offered a program. What is more of a travesty is that as a School Committee member representing the children in Ward 2 he has never received anything in writing from the Mayor saying that this offer even exists. The committee has read about it in the newspaper. While this offer exists in the public and there was a conversation with the Mayor and the Superintendent, it seems to be a lot of political talk. If there was a serious offer, and if there was money out there and people want to help school children,

then someone should put it in writing that this money exists. The Mayor should get together with the Chairperson of the School Committee to try to get the money to the children. He told Mr. Ferri that if it is political hearsay, they are using him as a pawn and using the committee as a wedge just to get votes, and unfortunately they are wasting both Mr. Ferri's time and the committee's time and doing a disservice to the children. Mrs. White remarked that she gave the Mayor the opportunity, and he said that protocol didn't mean a thing; he doesn't have to go through anyone. Mr. Cardarelli told Mr. Ferri that when the resolution is brought before the committee regarding the state aid appropriations, he would ask him what item should be cut in order to have middle school interscholastic sports.

Linda Passett, Teacher Assistant – She stated that she was speaking for the Literacy teacher assistants. She didn't know if people realize that these teacher assistants help out in the classrooms. There is testing involved in every grade, and they help with it so that the teacher can be doing other things. They conduct small groups, and repetition is

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how the students learn. She was an assistant in first grade last year, and this is where the students learn to read. There were many children, who without her help, wouldn't learn to read. Without teacher assistants, many students would be pushed along. There are

two classrooms at Oak Lawn School that are almost maxed out. They have one teacher assistant who helps with testing and reading. Some of those children will be lost in the classroom. The teacher assistant who accompanied her to this meeting has been working in the school department for three years, and during those three years she has been laid off and had involuntary transfers. She stated that this wasn't fair to the children. The teacher assistants should be in the classrooms because they really help the children.

III. RESOLUTIONS

ADMINISTRATION

PERSONNEL

NO. 04-9-5 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the appointment of Assistant Principal, High School, be approved.

NO. 04-9-6 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the appointment of Assistant Principal, Middle School, be approved.

Moved by Mr. Lupino, seconded by Mr. Cardarelli and unanimously carried to table Resolution No.'s 04-9-5, 04-9-6, and 04-9-16.

NO. 04-9-7 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the

Superintendent, the appointment of Special Education Department Chair, Cranston High School West, be approved.

Moved by Mr. Cardarelli and seconded by Mr. Lupino that this Resolution be adopted.

Mrs. Ciarlo stated that this Resolution was to recommend the appointment of a special education department chair for Cranston High School West because this individual accepted another position in this district. Mrs. Ciarlo recommended to the committee Angela Paliotte for this position. Angela did her undergraduate work at the State University of New York. She has her Masters in Education from Providence College and received certification in guidance as well. This is not required for this position, but it is an added benefit for the district. She has been a special education teacher at St. Mary's Campus School in North Providence. She was a special education teacher from 1995 to 1998 at Stacy Middle School and from 1998 to August 2004 she has been the special education team department chair at Stacy Middle School. She is a Cranston resident and comes with much experience and background in education. Mrs. Ciarlo recommended Angela to the committee without reservation.

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This Resolution was adopted unanimously.

NO. 04-9-8 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following certified personnel be appointed for the 2004-2005 school year:

Richard Pecorelli, salary to be at the tenth step plus Bachelors plus 30 of the prevailing salary schedule

Education – Providence College

Experience – Cranston Public Schools Retiree

Certification – Middle/Secondary Mathematics

Assignment – Bain Middle School, Mathematics, .4 FTE

Effective Date of Employment – August 31, 2004

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 50915129 512100

Debra Caizzi Messenger, salary to be at the fifth step of the prevailing salary schedule

Education –Worcester State College, B.S.

Experience – Barrington Public Schools

License – Rhode Island Occupational Therapist

Assignment – Special Services, Itinerant, .6 FTE

Effective Date of Appointment – August 31, 2004

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 14732010 511440

Heather J. Silva, salary to be at the third step of the prevailing salary schedule

Education – Utica College of Syracuse University, B.S.

Experience – Meeting Street School

License – Rhode Island Occupational Therapist

Assignment – Special Services, Itinerant, 1.0 FTE

Effective Date of Appointment – August 31, 2004

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 14732010-511440

Colleen Grasso, salary to be at the first step of the prevailing salary schedule

Education – Providence College, B.A.

Experience – Cranston Public Schools' Substitute

Certification – Middle School Social Studies

Assignment – Western Hills Middle School, Social Studies, .5 FTE

Effective Date of Appointment – August 31, 2004

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 12911012 512100

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Jane G. Treat, salary to be at the first step plus Masters of the prevailing salary schedule

Education – University of Rhode Island, B.A., M.A.

Experience- Cranston Public Schools' Substitute

Certification - Elementary (1-6)

Assignment - Grade 1, Dutemple School, 1.0 FTE

Effective Date - August 31, 2004

Authorization - Replacement

Fiscal Note: 11611012 512000

Moved by Mr. Cardarelli, seconded by Mr. Lupino and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

NO. 04-9-9 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following certified personnel be appointed as a substitute on a temporary basis as needed:

Frederick Pastore Administration, Middle/High School

Moved by Mr. Cardarelli, seconded by Mr. Lupino and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

NO. 04-9-10– RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the resignation of the following certified personnel be accepted:

Genna M. Cookson, School Psychologist

Itinerant, .4FTE

Effective Date: September 1, 2004

Elisabeth MacMillan, Speech Pathologist

Itinerant, 1.0 FTE

Effective Date: August 26, 2004

Moved by Mr. Cardarelli, seconded by Mr. Lupino and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

NO. 04-9-11 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the resignation of the following coach be accepted:

Joseph Lynch, Head Boys' Soccer

Park View Middle School

Effective Date: September 1, 2004

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Moved by Mr. Cardarelli, seconded by Mr. Lupino and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

NO. 04-9-12- RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following individual be appointed as an athletic coach:

Joseph Lynch, Assistant Boys' Soccer, Cranston High School West

Step – 5

Class – C

Playing Competition – High School

Experience – Head Coach Soccer, Park View Middle School

Certification – Rhode Island Coaches Certification; CPR/First Aid Certified

Moved by Mr. Cardarelli, seconded by Mr. Lupino and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

NO. 04-9-14– RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following non-certified employees be appointed:

Gianni Petteruti, Technical Assistant, Computer

Effective Date of Employment – September 1, 2004

Assignment – Cranston Area Career & Technical Center

Fiscal Note: 17430814 514000

Kristin Murray, Bus Monitor

Effective Date of Employment: September 1, 2004

Fiscal Note: 14347518 518600

Donna Hatcher, Bus Monitor

Effective Date of Employment: September 1, 2004

Fiscal Note: 14347518 518600

Deborah Pellegrino, Bus Monitor

Effective Date of Employment: September 1, 2004

Fiscal Note: 14347518 518600

Luz Cotto, Bus Monitor

Effective Date of Employment: September 1, 2004

Fiscal Note: 14347518 518600

Tina Russo, Bus Monitor

Effective Date of Employment: September 1, 2004

Fiscal Note: 14347518 518600

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Moved by Mr. Cardarelli, seconded by Mr. Lupino and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

NO.04-9-15 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the resignation of the following non-certified personnel be accepted:

**Colleen A. Hitchings, Technical Assistant, Health Occupations
Cranston Area Career & Technical Center
Effective Date: September 1, 2004**

**Karen A. Simeone, Teacher Assistant
Child Outreach
Effective Date: September 1, 2004**

Ellen DeLuca, Teacher Assistant

Dutemple School

Effective Date: September 1, 2004

Moved by Mr. Cardarelli, seconded by Mr. Eramian and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

NO. 04-9-16 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the termination of Employee A be accepted.

As noted previously after Resolution No. 04-9-6, this Resolution was tabled.

BUSINESS

NO. 04-9-17 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the 2004-2005 budget be increased by \$512,530 representing the additional State Aid funding. The additional appropriation would be used to fund the following areas:

Non-public textbooks \$ 40,000

Special Education Teacher Assistants (6) \$191,832

Teacher Assistants (5) \$ 77,112

Library Clerks (8) \$ 56,310

Textbook/Supply Accounts \$ 59,376

Saturday Detention (Middle Schools) \$ 12,900

Transportation Vehicles \$ 75,000

\$512,530

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Moved by Mr. Cardarelli and seconded by Mr. Eramian that this Resolution be adopted.

Mr. Cardarelli referred to the \$40,000 increase for non-public textbooks and asked what this would bring the account to now. Mr. Balducci indicated that this would bring this account just under \$120,000, and it was budgeted for \$80,000 last year. When the budget was created this year, administration looked at what was spent last year, and the district spent just under \$80,000 for 03-04, so they budgeted the same for 04-05. Unfortunately, the district is now spending approximately \$120,000. As of today, he is still getting purchase orders for non-public textbooks. Mrs. Ciarlo explained that the state expanded the high school textbooks to English and social studies, and those books are expensive. The cost approximately \$50.00 or \$60.00 per textbook. The district has to do its obligation to the non-public schools, but there should be some equity so that the

district can do it for both. It is the district's obligation by law to provide these books for non-public schools. The state list is usually made up of texts that other communities are using in Rhode Island. Other communities that have higher budgets than Cranston are able to buy the new texts. The district is buying newer textbooks for the non-public school population than for the students in Cranston Public Schools. As it stands right now, even though administration estimated \$80,000, the district will exceed \$120,000 before it is done. There are many students on waiting lists, and don't find out until school starts that they are accepted. This district has an obligation to provide those students with books.

Mr. Cardarelli stated that the new account amount will be \$120,000. He asked if these students were required to return the books in the same condition as is required by Cranston Public Schools' students, and Mrs. Ciarlo responded that they are required to return them in the same condition they received them. When the students return the books in June, they are ready to take the books for the following school year. The state kept adding new categories to the list. The anthology books are far more expensive than those supplied for a fifth grader. Mr. Cardarelli said he heard from two parents who received non-public transportation. He asked if this district charges for non-public school transportation, and Mrs. Ciarlo said that the district doesn't charge. The school department would bus out of the district or region only if there were special education students involved. Mr. Cardarelli noted that the district doesn't charge to bus

students to Fatima High School or Bay View, and Mrs. Ciarlo responded that the district isn't allowed to charge for those students. The school department is obligated to transport special education students out of the district at no cost.

Mr. Eramian remarked that the state passed a law that they have extended the non-public textbooks to high school, and, as a result, because this district has been short approximately \$1 million in the textbook account in last year's budget, this district is now buying textbooks for children at Bishop Hendricken High School who are Cranston residents, but the district can't afford to buy books for their own students at Cranston West and Cranston East.

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Mrs. Ciarlo explained in detail how the process is handled for the non-public textbooks.

Mr. Lupino indicated to Mr. Balducci that before the committee received the ruling regarding the fines being collected for textbooks and that the district couldn't hold back grades or graduation tickets, etc., he asked if the district was collecting between \$35,000 and \$38,000 for them. Mr. Balducci indicated that he was not sure of the amount. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that the state does make a token effort to reimburse for the fact that the district is putting out money for textbooks. Mr. Balducci stated that the district received \$19,200

from the state last year for reimbursement, while it spent \$80,000. This money is not guaranteed from the state, and Mr. Balducci said that he doesn't count on it. He doesn't know what the amount will be until February. It is part of the state law as it relates to non-public textbooks. He doesn't count it as revenue until he sees it.

Mr. Cardarelli asked Mr. Balducci if he had squared away the health care account for 03-04. Mr. Balducci responded that there is approximately a \$350,000 surplus overall.

In response to Mr. Palumbo' question as to whether or not the special education teacher assistants are mandated by law, Mrs. Ciarlo stated that they were. Mr. Laliberte further explained that in the past the district has always asked for additional teacher assistants for special education, and this budget year was no different; administration had asked for an extra ten assistants. They were cut in the first round of budget cuts. He then was asked to look into the possibility of cutting back ten more teacher assistants, and he did so. He was able to come up with some students who had either moved out of the system and who had a one on one situation with a teacher assistant so that person no longer needed an assistant. For other students it was written out of their IEP and no longer required a one on one situation. They were a little older and were able to function on their own. In some circumstances, class sizes were low. Come late June, early July, the numbers began to climb, and they are seeing numbers climbing even more. Those ten teacher assistants that administration

thought they were originally not going to need suddenly finding they need more. In reality, they needed a total of thirteen teacher assistants. They were able to juggle people around, and in some instances, were able to place an aid in a classroom where they could service two children who may have otherwise gone with a one on one. They were able to make some reductions that way. They needed thirteen and are actually replacing ten. By law, anytime the ninth child is placed in a special education classroom, a teacher assistant must be in the classroom. At the present time, the district is functioning pretty much close to 60% of the special education classrooms have more than eight students. When he wrote the first memo to Mrs. Ciarlo, he knew there were ten waiting for placement already. In addition, if there is a significant needs population or a severe and profound population, when a class reaches six students, a teacher assistant must be added. In the very young classrooms, the DLP's, and there are significant needs, they require one adult to every two students. When dealing with a DLP student, one is

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dealing with children who can't clothe themselves or haven't learned to speak yet and aren't toilet trained. A teacher can't handle six or seven children on her own with all of them having significant needs. Mrs. Ciarlo also pointed out that there were a number of students with special needs at the elementary level who are moving on to middle school and now need a teacher assistant. When the IEP team meets

in June, they may indicate that a middle school student will need a teacher assistant to maneuver around in the middle school. Mr. Laliberte further stated that there is the possibility for more special needs students coming to Cranston this year. His directors have told him that they see an increased population coming from Providence. Mrs. Ciarlo added that once an IEP team states that a teacher assistant is needed, administration cannot over ride their decision. The district wants to give adequate service to these children through early intervention to prevent it from happening in later years. The district needs ten teacher assistants, but she is talking about taking six out of Fund 1 and four from the IDEA Grant. The carry over money doesn't come in until November, and she wants to be sure to keep money in the account because history has shown that things change in the course of the year. Administration is watching very closely that the teacher assistants are placed where they are needed to comply with state law. They would remove a teacher assistant if they don't need to keep the person in the classroom. Mr. Laliberte added that the district does receive federal reimbursement for teacher assistants who are in the Fund 1 budget only. If they are funded out of IDEA, the district doesn't get reimbursed.

Mr. Palumbo stated that the committee has no choice but to fund the special education teacher assistants and the non-public textbook accounts.

Mr. Eramian asked if the district saw a higher demand this year than

previous years for one-on-one teacher assistants in the transition from elementary to middle school, and Mr. Laliberte responded that there is a significant rise in the children with Autism. With the more severe cases of Autism, they almost always require a one-on-one teacher assistant because of the types of behaviors. These children can't make their needs known because they can't speak so they need an adult to accompany them. This is a national trend. The number in the pre-school population is incredible. Cranston processed ninety-five students for pre-school who are about to turn three years of age. Once they turn three years old, the district must provide services.

Mr. Eramian asked how many Kindergarteners were expected this year, and Mrs. Ciarlo responded that the Assistant Superintendent is just getting the actual numbers in. Many of these students attend all-day Kindergarten in a private setting and then come to Cranston Public Schools for first grade. She believes the number will be down by approximately 100 because of the new state law regarding age requirement for Kindergarten. Mr. Eramian commented that in two years this city could be facing the fact that 10% of the children coming into the district will have some form of special needs. Some of them may require a one-on-one teacher assistant. Mrs. Ciarlo added

that she would rather have one teacher assistant per classroom and then in special situations have one on one. Many of these students require a one-on-one teacher assistant when they go on to middle school because they get lost.

In response to Mr. Cardarelli's question as to what the special education teacher assistants make per hour, Mr. Votto indicated that \$12.56 per hour is the highest step. Mrs. Ciarlo explained that the literacy teacher assistants work three hours and the special education teacher assistants work six hours. The library clerks are all three-hour positions.

Mr. Cardarelli asked the total of the non-public textbooks/supply account before adding the \$59,000, and Mr. Balducci responded that the original number for 03-04 was \$1 million. Before the court case, it was cut.

Mr. Lupino stated that the point Mr. Cardarelli was trying to make is that the committee was forced by the court order not to order textbooks ahead of time. The district would order textbooks at the end of one year to be ready for September the following year. The savings at that time was quoted as \$80,000. At this juncture, the committee is adding \$59,376 which is not even the savings the district had to give up through the court decision. Mr. Balducci remarked that there will be some items that won't get into the schools before December. Mr. Cardarelli stated that he wanted to make sure

that the \$59,000 was going into the \$1 million account the committee lost in court. Mr. Cardarelli noted that Mr. Edge said that the school department over budgeted health care by \$2.7 million and asked how accurate his statement was. Mr. Balducci said that Mr. Edge was off by \$2.3 million.

Mr. Eramian asked where the five teacher assistant positions would be placed, and Mrs. Ciarlo said they are earmarked for grades Kindergarten, 1 and 2. All of the grades have twenty-five students in them. Mr. Laliberte added that he has to take into consideration the needs of the building as well. He received a phone call from a principal today who was not up to twenty-five students in Kindergarten or Grade 1 but is now up to twenty-five in Grade 1. There are some students with needs in that classroom. Either they are Title 1 schools or a high population of students with needs in a classroom. In some cases, he was looking at the test scores as well. Some of the test scores were flat or had gone down slightly. Those factors were taken into consideration as well.

Mr. Lupino referred to the library clerks and indicated that through e-mails and correspondence back and forth with those clerks, it appears that the library clerks are the best bargain in the system right now. In response to Mr. Lupino's question as to whether or not any of these positions were lost, Ms. Bryan said that the district always had ten three-hour secretaries with no benefits. One year ago last summer, one took a job outside and left Cranston. She was starting

the process last year to hire library clerks and was asked to stop the process to hire the tenth person because of the

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budget crisis. Ms. Bryan explained the process in detail. She indicated that there are nine bodies doing ten positions. Mr. Lupino stated that nine bodies were laid off, and they are calling back eight. Ms. Bryan indicated that technically they have not been laid off. Mr. Lupino asked if the eight being called back were the original eight and if anyone left. Ms. Bryan responded that none left, and one person would be eliminated. Mr. Votto noted that these are non-union positions, and he will hold a lottery for the positions because he feels it is the fairest way. Mrs. Ciarlo added that Ms. Bryan and her team have been very supportive. In order to maximize what the library secretaries do, Mrs. Ciarlo wants them working with technology and helping the students access and use the library. When the district has more money, she wants to replenish the elementary library books. Mr. Lupino pointed out that the library clerks are returning, but this was not the only area in libraries that was affected. There were supplies accounts, textbook accounts, and software accounts as well. Ms. Bryan added that Arlington School has \$500 to spend on books this year which will purchase 50 books. Orchard Farms School has 400 students, and they can spend \$1,000. When she is building a budget, she figures \$8.50 per student.

Mr. Palumbo referred back to the teacher assistants and indicated that five were coming back. Mrs. Ciarlo noted that there were thirty-three last year, and with the five coming back, this brings the number to fifteen. Mr. Palumbo stated that the district is going backwards in critical programs of literacy, mathematics, etc. Mrs. White commented that the administrators have been very creative in finding ways to do things with less money. However, the time has come when the parents will feel the hurt of being under funded. The committee sat many nights trying not to make it so hurtful to the students directly. It has to give somewhere. Parents need to be aware that they have to get up and fight for their school if they want to maintain what they have. They have to help the School Committee fight it. Mrs. Ciarlo added that the magic is not to cut anything out entirely but reduce it so that hopefully it can be brought back. The district is cutting into something that is terribly under funded. The district is doing less than it did in 2001. Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard is getting bare. Now other districts are going after Cranston's administrators to take them to other communities because they want what Cranston's has.

Mr. Lupino asked Mr. Nero, Principal of Western Hills Middle School, how important Saturday detention was to his school. Mr. Nero stated that he had been listening to the comments regarding the bare bones budget and the district taking steps backwards this year. When he took over at Western Hills six years ago, there were some serious issues with discipline at the school. He and his administrative staff

have been able to reduce the number of suspensions incredibly at his school as he did at Cranston East when he worked with Mr. Frederick. Western Hills has moved to a high performing school, and this was a big factor for the school. Saturday detention works wonderful for his school. When they are dealing with a student who has made a serious infraction of the rules, if they are looking to suspend a child that may be done, there may be

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Saturday detention, and they will try to keep the child in school so that he can be educated. They have been extremely successful with Saturday detention. When it was almost cut out a few years ago, it was cutting his heart. They are able to keep these students in school and help them to be successful. Many of these students come to school with the weight of the world on their shoulders. Mrs. Ciarlo added that the planning centers also provide the therapeutic intervention needed. In response to Mr. Lupino's question as to whether or not the amount of \$4,300 was the amount spent at the middle schools for Saturday detention, Mr. Balducci said he came up with an average from what the middle schools spent last year.

Mr. Cardarelli asked Mr. Traficante to explain the information given to Mrs. Ciarlo regarding middle school sports. A copy of the report is attached for the record. Mr. Lupino commented that he asked Mr. Traficante for this information yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Traficante stated that the districts are required to submit all eligibility lists on line. The information was taken from the 2003-2004 school year. Unfortunately, at some point in time during the summer, the 8th grades at the middle schools and the 12th grades at the high schools were eliminated from the data base to make room for the incoming students. The 6th grade population and the 7th grade population at each of the schools would be this year's 8th grade population and 7th grade population. When the athletic teams are made up, usually there aren't that many 6th graders who make the teams. It was safe to assume that the 8th grade percentage would be similar to that of the 7th grade. Mr. Traficante went on to say that Mr. Lupino told him that he did not want to know about the one student who played three sports; he didn't want him counted as three students. He wanted that student counted as one. At Bain, there were 239 7th grade students in the school, and 51 students played some interscholastic sport. This reflects 21% of the population at the school played an interscholastic sport. Each athlete was counted one time only. Mr. Cardarelli asked Mr. Traficante how the numbers would compare for an intramural program. Mr. Traficante said that a lot would depend on how the program is set up and the sports offered. Wrestling or baseball can't be offered because they are physical sports. Bain has run intramural sports for a long time, and 70% of the students at Bain participated in sports. He further stated that he should be the sports department's biggest advocate, but his fear right now is that the district is losing more athletes at the high

school level because of education and not because of sports. He doesn't want the students leaving because they can get a better education at LaSalle or Hendricken. Before adding middle school sports, he wants to do high school sports right. He is paying last year's bills with this year's money. He is operating at 75% capacity at the high school level. He loves sports very much, but the district is not doing high school sports right. He has cut every possible corner, and the high school students are not getting a fair shot. He advocated doing something 100% right before moving on. If the district can't get more than 50% participation in intramural sports, then they are doing something wrong.

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With regard to the number of students that try out for middle school interscholastic sports versus the number that make a team, Mr. Traficante indicated that he receives many calls regarding Western Hills' baseball, softball and basketball. The baseball coach at Western Hills had in excess of fifty students try out, and he carried twenty which was too many. Girls' basketball also has a significant number. Mr. Nero added that in some instances the coaches don't last very long because of the parental pressure. Mr. Traficante noted that he is running out of helmets and uniforms for the football teams. He reiterated the fact that he wants to do high school sports right first.

Mr. Cardarelli pointed out that the judge stopped the district from saving \$80,000 in textbook purchases, and the city will harp on the fact that the committee didn't collect co-pays from the employees. The Mayor wasn't living in the City of Cranston when it was \$15 million in debt and the city was ready to be taken over. He wasn't here when the O'Leary administration was begging the committee to please do everything possible to make them take a zero. He was down in Tennessee making millions. The committee was able to get the bargaining units to negotiate that. This committee is living with a situation that was not their doing; it was what the committee tried to do to help out the situation. Now, unfortunately, the students are living with the errors made in City Hall, and the school department is stuck with the results. He told Mr. Ferri that he could see what the committee is doing with a paltry \$512,000 adding to non-public school textbooks that won't benefit the students in Cranston Public Schools. They are adding special education teacher assistants, library clerks, etc. The Mayor will say that the committee was woefully inadequate in their case in the court room. The budget amount had nothing to do with the budget. \$1 million was cut from textbooks and the health care account had nothing to do with the overall budget. He asked Mr. Ferri where he would advise him to take the money from to pay for middle school sports. Mr. Ferri responded that he would be crazy to think that any of these items should be taken away. The most important thing to do is to look for solutions. He told the committee that he respected the many hours they spend doing their job. There are great educators in Cranston. He does not

want to say that it can't be done. Everyone has to put their heads together to find a solution. He asked if there could be volunteer qualified parents to act as coaches, and this would be an alternative to intramural sports. He understands that the middle school interscholastic program would cost \$97,000, and it could be cut to \$50,000. He understands the fact that the Mayor has offered this money only in the newspapers. He asked what would happen if the Mayor put the money on the table and didn't state what the money had to be used for. In response, Mr. Votto indicated that the Cranston Teachers' Alliance would have a problem with this. Contractually, they are obligated to their teachers and coaches. Administration has had this discussion with the CTA and some members of the City Council. This would be a liability issue for the athletes. Coaches have to take certain steps such as being certified statewide and taking first aid courses, and parents volunteering would be a liability issue.

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Mr. Traficante explained that Western Hills won the State Championship last year. This year that team would be allowed to participate as a club team and compete against other schools in the state tournament but as a team would not be allowed to win the state tournament. This is allowed in wrestling, cross country, and track which the athletes can compete individually or as a club team. Club

sports are not supported by the athletic department. If there is a coach who volunteers, the student athletes would have to pay for transportation, officials, custodial overtime, equipment and supplies, etc. Mrs. White asked if the parents could have fund raisers for those clubs, and Mr. Traficante said that all clubs are under the jurisdiction of the school principal. It is the same as having a debate team. The principal would have to fund the team in order to compete. Mrs. White indicated that if the parents really wanted to have a wrestling team and Mr. Nero wanted to get involved, the team could do it. With regard to insurance, Mr. Traficante said that unless a student competes in the injury fund, he or she would not be covered. Under the injury fund, a student's health insurance pays first, and whatever the insurance doesn't pay, the injury fund picks up the balance. In a club team sport, the injury fund would not pay.

Mr. Cardarelli stated that he didn't wish to further his reputation as an anti-sports person, but he is one who believes that parents who have been involved all the way up in their children's sports endeavors up to the time they reach middle school, then after that point they are barred from involvement. At that point, the teachers take over. Even then the parents become involved as sudio assistant coaches, but they are not paid. They work the sidelines and work as assistant coaches. It is a shame that parents are left out at the middle school and high school levels. They go through all the stages raising their children. In order to be volunteer coaches, they should have all the same certifications and background checks as the paid coaches.

When a previous School Committee was looking at a sports fee, Mr. Cardarelli did a tremendous amount of research on what the other districts did; namely, Massachusetts. The costs that parents pay, without batting an eyelash, to help reduce the cost and the burden to school districts is amazing. In Newton, Massachusetts, the parents contribute \$1,700 toward the hockey program. There should be some compromise where Cranston is so desperate for funds, that there must be some group of parents, committee members, or advocates who are willing to determine how sports are handled. The priorities have to be rearranged because it is not being done correctly. Sports are not being fully funded the right way. Sports are so dynamic in Cranston, and the residents have to find ways to be more creative. It has to be taken out of the political process. The school department doesn't need someone with a bull horn in front of the administration building making a political statement, and the School Committee doesn't need to have students attacking them by the same students they are standing up for.

Mrs. Ciarlo noted that there is a law that school departments can't charge for sports. Many communities have had to cut some middle school and high school interscholastic sports. If sports are a priority, then the school districts should be looking to change the

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law. It should be done the right way. The district should present

what they want to do for art, music and sports. It should not be either or. A student learns more about teaming than about sports. The district administrators and the School Committee know that sports keep kids in school. Middle school is an exploration time. Those students who are interested in sports should not be cut off from that interest. When presenting the budget, the district doesn't share enough of the good things that are done, and they have to look for ways of funding. The district has to be very careful that the administrators plan well and look at the obligations with regard to safety and liability issues. There is only so much money to go around no matter what happens. At the present time, there is fund raising for so many activities. This is not the time for fighting for middle school interscholastic sports. It is the time when it is presented to the City Council what is needed. When she spoke to the Mayor, he indicated that he would give money for middle school sports and the school department could contribute \$17,000. She told him that she didn't have \$17,000 to give to middle school sports. The Mayor has to realize that this has to stop. She asked him how many people had called complaining about middle school sports, and he indicated only seven had called. Mrs. Ciarlo told him that out of 80,000 people, seven was a very small number. She also told him that she didn't have enough money for texts, supplies, and materials. She recommended bringing back some things so that they would not be lost entirely. No computers were being purchased, and the district doesn't have money for computer supplies and materials. The little supplies that have been ordered are coming in late. She can't tell the

teachers to purchase supplies out of their own pockets. The last time there was a five-year plan to update textbooks was 1987 and that is because the BEP Plan was being implemented. The literacy books are way behind. With the previous textbook plan for purchasing, the district was able to save a considerable amount of money, and that plan is gone. As part of the committee's action this evening, the district has to look at where it has to go to adequately fund this school system, and middle school sports is a part of that. The committee has to make a bigger case and do it earlier.

Mrs. White mentioned that the current city administration has not made it easy for the school department. The district was getting a 2% discount for paying all its bills within thirty days. All of a sudden, the city changed the way it allocates the funds to the school department which made the school system lose that 2%. 2% on large purchases is a tremendous amount of money. The city did all in its power to give the school department the business. If the city was so worried about middle school sports, that 2% alone for the year that the district could have saved would have paid for the middle school sports. These are the things that John Q Public doesn't know. There are many things going on that the public is not aware of, and that is why the School Committee appears to be resentful. Just before a Primary, the Mayor comes forward wanting to give the school department some money for middle school sports. It is a political ploy because the Mayor knows the process. The city administration has done some very hurtful things to this school department. While the School

nickels and dimes, city administration is trying to find ways to make the committee expend more money, and that is a big problem for this city.

Mr. Eramian stated that the Mayor who was supposedly offering the school department \$80,000 spent \$120,000 on an audit that he could have gotten for free. The Mayor is sitting on an \$8 million plus surplus which is no mystery because he paid almost 14 months of expenses last year, and he only spent probably 13-1/2 months of expenses because they accrued all the way to the very end of the year that they could have under state law. Then this year he was sure they didn't accrue so that they took in 12 months of taxes and only paid 10-1/2 months of expenses. So, \$8 million was easy to get, and he hoped the public was smarter than to fall for an accounting trick. It is a legal accounting trick, but a trick nonetheless. Then, to come back, and say in violation of state law, he wanted to tell the school department where he was going to put the money. There is a reason why it was separated, and it was separated to take the politics out of education. The residents need, as taxpayers, to keep the politics out of education. If there is one thing he has learned in the last two years of being on the School Committee, it is in too far, the city wants to control every penny, and they don't have the children's best interest

in their heart at all. They can be very convincing, but they really don't have the children's best interest in their hearts. Otherwise, the city wouldn't have an \$8 million surplus and wouldn't have taken \$1 million out of textbooks which from a business standpoint makes no sense. The carrying cost on that \$1 million versus the savings that the school department gets by buying the textbooks a year or six months early, the benefits far outweigh the cost. The city is trying to play with the children's education in a way that is not on good financial terms. It is because it is the only place they can go because everything on the other side of the street is locked. The only place they could go was to attack the educational system, not because the educational system is bad, because he has looked at this educational system and it stands up against any other in the State of Rhode Island for cost and return on investment, for performance, for services, and for athletics. This system matches up to all of them, but for political reasons, because it is the only place the city can go because the children are basically expendable to them, they have done things because it is the only place to go. Mr. Eramian further commented that he was tired of people being dooped in this city by the sound bites. He is a business person and didn't come to the committee with a career in mind. This is the end of his career in December, and the money is being dangled for all the wrong reasons.

The Mayor took \$125,000 out of the school department's pocket, and now he is giving back \$72,000. He asked if the school department was supposed to say thank you. The Mayor is out there saying that it is a good thing, and there are people who will forgive him for taking

the other \$48,000. He couldn't see this as a good business deal.

Mr. Cardarelli left the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

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Mr. Eramian further commented that he has gone through this budget time and time again, and the money just isn't there. The school department has been intentionally put on a diet beyond what is fiscally reasonable. There is a point being made here, and, unfortunately, the children of the city are being made to pay for it, and he can't support it. Everyone at this meeting would be willing to work on a rational program to reinstate everything that was cut out this past year. It wasn't fun, and it will be less fun next year. It will be less fun next year because there will be more that has to be cut unless this system is changed.

In response to Mr. Eramian's question as to where the \$75,000 for transportation would be used, Mrs. Ciarlo said that the money would be used for buses. The district went out to bid for used buses. Since going out to bid, they found out that they are down one handicapped bus because of population requirements. One additional bus must be added to the fleet. There is one spare bus at the present time, but the district can't jeopardize it because if a bus breaks down, they

won't be able to make a bus run. Mr. Scherza added that originally they planned to be used buses that could be rehabbed for use. With the fleet breaking down, the district is down one right now, and they are down to one spare for the entire fleet. This spare is used frequently. This money is to be used for the purchase of used buses to keep the fleet going.

Mr. Lupino stated that his one disappointment with this resolution was the fact that the committee was unable to find any money for energy auditing purposes. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that she didn't include it in this resolution because the energy audit company will make a presentation to the committee at the September 14th work session. If the committee decides to go forward, it will be at no cost because it will come out of the savings from utility costs. Mr. Lupino urged his colleagues to look at this information since some of the preliminary reports state savings of up to \$300,000. It would be nice to fund the auditor for the savings as well as put money back into asset protection and things that are not on this list that are sorely needed. Mr. Balducci added that the packet regarding energy conservation that was given to administration will be distributed to the committee members before September 14th. Mrs. Ciarlo noted that both Warwick and Pawtucket have used it, and they have been successful with the program.

This Resolution was adopted unanimously. Mr. Cardarelli was not present for the vote.

NO. 04-9-13 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, said non-certified personnel be recalled from layoff.

Moved by Mr. Eramian, seconded by Mr. Palumbo and unanimously carried to move this Resolution after Resolution No. 04-9-17.

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Moved by Mr. Eramian, seconded by Mr. Lupino and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted. Mr. Cardarelli was not present for the vote.

Moved by Mr. Palumbo, seconded by Mr. Eramian and unanimously carried that the meeting be adjourned.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at

9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael G. Cardarelli, Jr.

Clerk